Edited Interview with Frank Farren in Artane (28/5/2003)

Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire **(MM)** Frank Farren **(FF)**

1. **FF:** I was born in 1926 in North Kings Street Dublin. I went to St. Mary's School in St. Mary's Place just up near Parnell Square there. Then as a family we moved to Drumcondra in 1936 and I switched schools then and went to St. Patrick's School in Drumcondra, the same one as the Taoiseach went to, whether that's any claim or not (laugh). However, in those days, very, very few people, very, very few students went onto anything like university. It really wasn't for the masses.

2. **MM:** It was elite at the time?

3. **FF:** Oh totally, absolutely, it was closed shop all along the line. In fact very few went to third level or went to college.

4. **MM:** Even second level?

5. **FF:** Even to leaving cert, very few. We were a reasonably large family, seven of us.

6. **MM:** What did your father do?

7. **FF:** Well my father was, this is interesting. My father was a compositor in the printing, which is quite a skill. Now he was involved in the volunteers in 1916. And he was still in the rebellion of 1916, not in the GPO. I'm not claiming he was in the GPO. Everyone claims they were in the GPO (laugh).

8. **MM:** It couldn't have fitted them all (laugh).

9. **FF:** Well he was in the Four Court Garrison under Commandant Daly and he was out posted to Church Street, which is Father Mathew Hall. That was an outpost. He was involved in all the usual things. There was one battle in North King Street where he was. However, after they surrendered they were deported. They went Frongoch in Wales. First they went up to Ballykindler in Northern Ireland and they were there for a couple of months and then they went to Frongoch in Wales.

10. Now he was working with Healy's the printers at that time, as a compositor. Now when he came back, that was out. They wouldn't touch anyone who was blacklisted. So he got himself involved into shop keeping, drapery, because the mother she had, she was associated with drapery so they opened a shop. They opened a shop actually in North King Street. He wasn't cut for it and with family pressures it just didn't work out. So he eventually got himself involved in insurance. It was quite a common thing at that time to buy yourself some form of occupation, you bought a book.

11. **MM:** Right and you put stamps in it, is it?

12. **FF:** No, no you collected the premiums off everyone and you worked off the commission and then when you got new customers you got commission. So he was in insurance for the rest of his life. It wasn't what he set out for, it wasn't what he was skilled at, but however, as I say very few went on, well because he had a trade, a good trade, and he lost it. he always regretted that. He always said to us when we were at school at that time, no matter what you do get yourself some sort of a qualification. Because so many people were leaving schools at that time and just drifting into offices as office boys and just runners really and they never went anywhere. So he said get a skill, you know, so I left St. Patrick's and I went to Parnell Square Technical School and because I

hadn't..... I was finished in St. Patrick's, I wasn't going to go onto secondary and they had a course in Parnell Square at that time that was very akin to what they call the year here they have, the free year.

13. **MM:** Right, the transition year.

14. **FF:** The transition year. It was a course that was very like that and it was a course that didn't cover anything special but covered everything in general. So at the end, coming towards the completion of that course... I never did very well in school, I never liked school. Not particularly good at it at all. But when I went to this transition course I found the whole approach to teaching was so totally different, I literally blossomed to be quite honest with you, I saw education, I saw teaching, I saw everything in a totally different light in the one year and I did very well there. I was only there for the year but like anything that came up you know and the different teachers set some sort of a test or something like. You were there sort of thing. However they announced towards the end that there were certain courses that were being run by the Vocational Educational Committee and that they were offering scholarships for students if you cared to apply for them. Now I had never..... So one of them was a chef's course which was being done in Parnell Square at that time, not for very long. Michael Ganley did his first year in Parnell Square and his second year down in Cathal Brugha Street. I can't honestly, even to today, I can't honestly say what clicked me to say well I'll have a go at that.

15. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.

16. **FF:** But the idea of not being out, being indoor and the artistic side, I saw catering from the artistic side and producing elaborate say wedding cakes or that, something with artistic tendencies and all like that. I said I'd have a go at it. No loss. So I went to the interview and there were about twenty or twenty-four lads there. It was all boys there. They never considered any girls at that time. So what they did, they called out the names of the unsuccessful and let go and when they came down to the ten I was still there, so I went into Cathal Brugha Street that September, that would have been around 1942. So this was the first chefs class that started in Cathal Brugha Street. Now they had done one the year before but that was the second half.

17. **MM:** The first year had been in Parnell yeah? So was Bill Kavanagh in that class with you?

18. **FF:** Bill Kavanagh.

19. **MM:** Was Bill Ryan?

20. **FF:** Bill Ryan.

21. **MM:** Can you remember any other name?

22. **FF:** Yeah, Frank McCarthy, Louis Taffe was a lad. There were two in that class that weren't scholarship students, they were paying students and one of them was Prosser. They had a hotel in Enniskerry and there was a lad by the name of Nugent, regrettably a young lad died pretty young. They were in that. There was a lad by the name of Bolden, John Bolden. He only spent a few years here after. He went to America. He wound up head of catering in JFK in the Airport. Now any of them that went away seemed to do well. I did a year there but this course, we didn't know it at the time of course, it wasn't geared towards the industry. It was just a cookery course.

23. **MM:** Yeah.

24. **FF:** It was taught to us by domestic economy teachers. Just straight forward cooking, very basic. But none of the adjuncts that are required like costing and that. I got a placement at the end of the year. They issued placements and I was asked if I'd go to Donegal. So, the idea of, like things were very quiet at that time, the war was on. Opportunities were very rare. A lot of things

we take for granted today, common little things just weren't available. There were scarcities. But the idea of going to Donegal like I'd never really travelled outside of Dublin (laugh) literally, Bray maybe, so I said yes I'll go to Donegal probably not knowing myself that the placement cause I had no idea what the placement would be. It was Rossapenna Hotel, one of the greatest hotels in the country particularly at the time. It was one of the very top hotels. So I did a season there and basically just did whatever I was told to do or asked to do. So I came back to do the second year in Cathal Brugha Street which would have been 1943 and what happened was, not enough numbers of the first group reported back. Out of the twelve there were only those who I think were sent to season hotels. So there was only three or four of us or something that reported back so they couldn't run a class with that so they decided to start another first year and they said they'd get us placements. So through the union they go us. So I was placed in the Hibernian Hotel. Now when I went to the Hibernian the difference between the attitude of management to staffs, of all grades, not just, I was only the boy, I didn't mind being called the boy, I was the boy but you know the attitude and the general whole ambience of the place towards staff and towards, it was literally vile and that is the famous Paul Besson, Ken Besson.

25. **MM:** Ken Besson

26. **FF:** Ken Besson, Paul was his father. He was the proprietor. His attitude to whoever. The tasks that were being administered from my level were so menial to what I had being doing in Rossapenna.

27. **MM:** In Rossapenna how many were in the crew or in the brigade as such?

28. **FF:** In the brigade, about eight or nine.

29. **MM:** But you were doing big numbers were you?

30. **FF:** Oh yeah. I was being broken into work way beyond what you call a first year apprentice. I was down the larder, butchering sides of beef. Everything there was first rate. However every single task that was done in Rossapenna was done by hand. There was no such thing as machinery. We hadn't even got electricity. Well we had a generator. We weren't on the ESB grid. Rural electrification hadn't reached that area. They had a generator but it wasn't powerful enough to produce what would be required so we only had lighting and refrigerating. Every other item in the whole kitchen was done by hand. It was tough but it was very interesting. Extremely interesting.

31. **MM:** What sort of ovens would have been?

32. **FF:** All coal range. Nothing after that. Coal range even your grill had to be done by getting the oven temperature up high enough to do.....

33. **MM:** It wasn't a char grill as such it was.....

34. **FF:** However I did between seasons in the Hibernian and the chef who was.....

35. **MM:** Who was head chef there at the time?

36. **FF:** His name was, it will come to me in a second. I always get stuck on names. However, it will come to me. His boast always was that he worked with Escoffier. (**note.** The chef in Rossapenna who worked with Escoffier was Kordina)

37. **MM:** Right.

38. **FF:** In London. He was just an apprentice. It was always his boast that he worked in the Savoy when Escoffier was chef. Now I feel he was, he wasn't a chef to be carrying those feels.

He was a German Jew that got out of Germany in the pretty early 30s. He got to London and then when the war started he got out of London. There was a time there they thought London was going to go. So he came to Ireland. Now he came to me at the commencement of the next season which would have been 1944 and asked me if I'd go back to it (Rossapenna) so I jumped at it to go back for another season because the experience was tremendous you know.

39. **FF:** And there was a Swiss pastry cook there and a Paul Zern. I can remember his name easier. He was an extraordinary character, an absolutely extraordinary character. He was there for the two seasons I was there. He went to Rossapenna at the beginning of the season and he never left the hotel until the season was over. Never left, never. Dedicated. He hadn't got the materials that he should have had because the war was on but he could turn out stuff practically from nothing. Amazing, absolutely amazing, a real artist.

40. **MM:** Sugar would have been one of the....

41. **FF:** Oh sugar was one of the big things that you hadn't got.

42. **MM:** Even butter was being exported wasn't it at that time.

43. **FF:** Butter yes. Butter was being exported and a lot. We had plenty of meats and fish which was all local produce but like white bread, sugar, tea, coffee, fuel, any form of fuel, cars, cars were off the road when only doctors and ministers, or so would have a car. The bus ran from Milford to Rossapenna twice a week. Twice a week. You got the bus I think on Tuesday and Friday. So if you didn't get out on Tuesday you had to wait till Friday. Extraordinary. When you think about it.

44. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.

45. **FF:** However, I went back for a second season and I progressed. I definitely progressed. I was doing basically *chef de partie* work. I was second year. So when I came back after that season I went to the Central (Hotel). Now the Central at that time was owned by a woman by the name of Mary Rowntree. She was the only *chef de cuisine* in the city. The female. But she was aging. The manageress was a Miss Mullins. Now Miss Mullins was so dedicated to the work, to the Board and to the Directors and to everybody. The morning she, the day she died she wanted to get up that morning because there was a board meeting. She had to get up. So they had to convince her one way or the other that because of weather, it was in the winter, because of weather that the board meeting had been cancelled. It wasn't but they had to convince her because she would have to be up. Now she was from Newry in County Down. She came from the Gresham. She was manageress in the Gresham at one stage when the Gresham, before the 1916 bombing and the Gresham was in where Clery's is now. (**note.** This is a misunderstanding – The Imperial Hotel was above Clery's)

46. **MM:** Right, yeah.

47. **FF:** As far as I know, because the Gresham was a new building cause that was built in the early 1920s after the Rising. But she was ex-Gresham.

48. **MM:** You're in the Central.

49. **FF:** Yeah, no I'm trying to think of that chefs name

50. **MM:** Don't worry about that, it will come back to you when your not trying.

51. **FF:** Yeah, however, so the Central wasn't really up to much but as I say you got the placement through the union like you know. You went to report, when you came back from the seasoned work you went to the union and the union had a so called sort of agency, posting up jobs. When you got a post well you would be reluctant to leave it too quick because there mightn't be

something else available. Whoever came the season 1945. Kordina is that chef's name from Rossapenna.

52. **MM:** What was his first name?

53. **FF:** Just chef to us. Kordina that was his name. So he came to me again but this time he wasn't going back to Rossapenna, he was going to Bundoran. Basically he wanted me to go back with him to be his *sous chef*, you see although officially I was still just third or fourth year apprentice. The only grading you had at that time was how many years you had done.

54. **MM:** You'd officially served yeah.

55. **FF:** And that was controlled through the union and through nothing else and so if you wanted to be recognised as a full-time well you could go down along the country and do a job but rates of pay and all wouldn't be controlled and you wouldn't have any comeback. However, I went to Bundoran with him and there was the Hamilton Hotel which has since been absorbed into the Hollyrood Hotel. It was next door to the Hollyrood. The Hollyrood and the Hamilton were two hotels alongside each other. The Hamilton was a small hotel, it wasn't large but it was about the best hotel in Bundoran if you take out theThe Great Northern. They were the two hotels that people that were looking for good hotels went to the Great Northern Hotel or to the Hamilton. And what happened there was some form (laugh) I wasn't long there when some form of (laugh) disagreement between the proprietor, Ticky Hamilton, Ticky was known as Ticky Hamilton. He was reputed to be a very hard man to get along with. I never found him any way difficult. However my friend Mr. Kordina up and left and came back to Dublin and I carried on. I was literally there on my own. We were only talking about fifteen to twenty residents. So I carried on there, he left and I carried on. Not long after that he succeeded in getting a chef to come and a second, I was supposed to be back as apprentice. From the day that the chef left, you see, my wage increased about fourfold you know. But when, a couple of weeks later when help did come, my wage stayed the say. So I went into Ticky and you know I said I think the cashier made some sort of a mistake because I was back the apprentice you know. Ah he said it was all right but don't tell the others. I had more than the *sous chef*. I had more than the second so I had a jazz time then for the rest of the season because I was in the money and I hadn't the responsibility and I, so forth. I had a good couple of months there. So I came back then.

56. **MM:** What sort of money would you have been earning at that stage anyway as an apprentice?

57. **FF:** Well I started, when I started in Rossapenna there were two grades of pay through the unions and so forth. There was the pay that if you were living in and living out. So Rossapenna was a live in so. But my first rate of pay was ten shillings a week. That would be fifty cent a day but sure you can't draw a comparison.

58. **MM:** Yeah. No but compared to what you got when you went up. You went up to…..

59. **FF:** So I was in Bundoran. I think…..

60. **MM:** Over a pound maybe.

61. **FF:** Oh no, well when I went there I was probably on about two pounds a week. Live in but he was paying me about five or so because I had stuck…..Stuck with him. As I say I didn't find him hard to get along with. I think if you, I always feel that if you work with professionals and your professional yourself in your attitude you'll get on all right.

62. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.

63. **FF:** So however, when I came back from Bundoran that must be 1945. The war was just over yeah and I went to Jammet's. A post came up on the board in the union. The routine was if any

post they came in they'd write it up on the board and if you were interested you knocked at the window and said I think I'll go for that you know. They'd look at you and say how many years have and their looking for a third or fourth year, blah, blah, blah. I went to Jammet's. Now again Jammet's was shunned by numbers because it was known to be a hard place to work so if you wanted it easy and you wanted it handy you didn't opt for Jammet's.

64. **MM:** When was Jammet's opened do you know?

65. **FF:** Well Jammet's, Louis Jammet was the owner/proprietor of Jammet. Now his father and his mother, the couple, they had a hotel in Suffolk Street where the National Bank is now at the corner. The corner of Suffolk Street and Trinity Street. Now not that present building, that's a new building, but they had a hotel there and I'd say it was the early turn of the century nineteen, I'd say before 1910, somewhere around that period they closed the hotel and they moved down into Nassau Street and opened a restaurant so Jammets would have come from around about the 1910-1912 time. (**note.** Jammets moved in 1926) In and about that time, I don't know exactly. But they changed to being a restaurant. Well I went there in 1945 and it was tough enough. A lot of unnecessary, making a big deal of things, everything was a big deal you know.

66. **MM:** Who was the chef there at the time?

67. **FF:** A Marc Faure

68. **MM:** Marc Faure. Right. And how many chefs would have been, how many in the brigade?

69. **FF:** About fourteen. In or about fourteen. The volume of trade wouldn't have been huge, not by today's standards like you know.

70. **MM:** It would have sat what sixty people.

71. **FF:** Oh the dining room would have sat fiftyish. There was a food bar then at the back and they did the oysters and all like that, the food bar and then there was behind the food bar there was a cocktail bar and then upstairs there was a grill room.

72. **MM:** So there was a restaurant and a grill room.

73. **FF:** Yes. And a food bar. And the grill room upstairs was the newer addition. That would have only been put in around about 1942, not long before I went to it. That was quite new, that part of upstairs was quite new. So it wasn't a huge, but then there wasn't a huge volume of trade available and particularly at that particular level. Even at what they called the middle grade there wasn't the type of trade that is available today. People didn't dine out. People didn't frequent hotels. Ninety-nine percent of people going to employ whether they were in offices or whether they were in trades, they put their lunch in their pocket in the morning and that was it. They didn't dine out as is being done today.

74. **MM:** So who were the customers in Jammet's?

75. **FF:** Well you had of course the company directors, you had the diplomatic corps, you had the people out of government, you had people like judges, solicitors and barristers and top people out of Trinity and that level. So the numbers wouldn't have been huge but it was on par with, it was classified as the restaurant, the French restaurant in Dublin. Now how exactly it compared to French restaurants in France or abroad I don't know.

76. **MM:** I heard that during the war that you got an awful lot of business from, I don't know was it like, was it English Generals or American Generals or had you much of that?

77. **FF:** Ah yes. There was, they would be serving on the continent or in Britain and they get leave of absence, they get leave and of course they immediately headed here because we were badly stuck for some materials but they were worse in England because they hadn't meats. Meat and everything in England was rationed. It was never rationed here. So they came here for a good feed to be honest, to be candid with you. So yes there would have been a fair splattering of those persons. Of course they would be in civvies you wouldn't know them. They wouldn't be in uniform. And you got a lot of, well when I say a lot, you wouldn't get one everyday. But you get Indian Princes and Gaekwad of Baroda or Aga Khan or Prince of Hydrobad, these Indian Princes, and from all over the Middle East and all. Some of these oil barons and all that type of thing. Of course you wouldn't know them they dressed in civvies like they only put on the robes when they were being weighed against themselves in gold.

78. **MM:** Yeah, yeah (laugh).

79. **FF:** At the annual ceremony.

80. **MM:** Tell me about that.

81. **FF:** Oh the Aga Khan and that, they are head of their religious sects and annually their weighed in gold against their weight. Their put on a scale and they keep piling on the gold until the scale balances and that's then the remuneration.

82. **MM:** Oh I never heard of that.

83. **FF:** Oh that's..... It wouldn't be only the Aga Khan, there were some others. There were some of these other Princes and that would be religious and political leaders at the same time you know. You got a fair splattering of those. They would be introduced usually through the Department of Foreign Affairs. They would ring up and say so and so-in-so will be going to lunch this evening/today. Be a party of three or four. Now because they never carried money, they signed for everything and then they'd be gone home a fortnight or so later whatever, their secretary would phone. They never carried money. In fact I think some of them it was against their religious.

84. **MM:** Convictions or beliefs, whatever.

85. **FF:** So therefore they had to be kind of introduced. So we would know maybe that day. Joseph was the Head Waiter. I never knew his second name, always just known as Joseph. He always wanted to be known as Joseph. Just Joseph. Head waiters at that time.....(**Note**. Josef Ruckli was his name)

86. **MM:** Was he Irish?

87. **FF:** He was Irish. Head waiters always just wanted to be known by their name. Just Joseph or Martin or whatever. But he'd announce at the hot press, his Excellency the Gaekwad of Borada will be coming. Of course everything had to stop for that you know. So there was a lot of bossing going on. They got no, their meal was no more than any other but it had to be.....

88. **MM:** Yeah.

89. **FF:** Jammet's was tough but I was always conscious like that if the only reference you had because people didn't need references then. They didn't bother with them then. References were useless. Eighty or ninety percent weren't from the people they were supposed to be from. They wrote them themselves and they got someone to sign them. References were lift the phone and ring. Where have you been? I've been in the Central and then you were classified as to whether you were all right or whether you weren't all right. So I was always conscious that the only thing you had to build on would be where you worked. That was like you know. There were no exams

at the end of the term and to go and get a certification. There was no such thing as certification. So you certification was.....

90. **MM:** Was your CV effectively.

91. **FF:** And your own reputation. So I stayed there until I finished my six year apprenticeship. That would be 1948.

92. **MM:** You were there for about three years.

93. **FF:** Close on three years. Now that, by commis standards that was a fairly long run. They'd come in and after a month or two they couldn't stick this. It was tough. It was rough. Rough going.

94. **MM:** What was the difference between the grill room and the normal restaurant?

95. **FF:** Well the grill room opened for lunchtime only. Well it opened in the evening but all meals would be served from the kitchen below. It was.....

96. **MM:** It would have an open grill.

97. **FF:** Oh an open charcoal. Well it should have been a charcoal grill but we used coke. But it was an open grill. You see, a grill should be open.

98. **MM:** Yeah, that's right yeah. It's basically a barbecue as such.

99. **FF:** It is yeah because otherwise it's a salamander. If the heat comes out on top it a salamander, although they keep calling everything, everything particularly on household equipment and all the rest. You go into any of the suppliers and you say well 'what's the salamander like in that cooker? Oh the grill (laugh). It was an open grill yes and it was a charcoal grill. Now that would operate over lunchtime. Now in the evening time then they didn't really do very many meals on that at all but if a person did want a meal there it would be from the normal menu and just brought up to the.....

100. **MM:** Was the main restaurant a bit more plush, like was the grill room more.....

101. **FF:** It was more modern and it was more.....

102. **MM:** Informal as such like you didn't have to..... Like at that stage did you still have to dress up when you were going out for dinner? How was that sort of.....

103. **FF:** No you wouldn't but you wouldn't go in, in casual. You'd have to be in and you wouldn't remove your coat while you were dining or you know you'd have to be wearing a tie. But it wouldn't be a dress, formal dress, it wouldn't be evening, well a lot of them would be in evening wear because they were passing onto a function. To have a party coming through in evening wear wouldn't be usual. But it was there that I of course ran into Mucky (P.J.) Dunne. Mucky was in the larder there. He operated the larder and then I was there till 1948.

104. **MM:** The kitchen was in the basement was it?

105. **FF:** No, no not quite. No, it was to the back but not in the basement. There was a basement below, it was on the same level as the restaurant and the bar.

106. **MM:** What was the environment like in the kitchen? Like was the heat unbearable?

107.**FF:** Well all kitchens at that time were because they were all up to that time and well quite into the 1950s, they were all open ranges, they were all coal fired ranges and they had to be stoked and set-up. I mean.....

108.**MM:** Was it like a big Aga sort of thing or?

109.**FF:** Well there was an oven on each side of the firebox in the centre and the top was flat. Solid top with rings for lifting and when you wanted extra heat you lifted the ring and put the container directly over the heat you know. There was a lot of trouble getting them up to heat because fuel was very scarce and you were literally burning anything you could lay your hands on. They used to have to watch the cookers out in the bar because they would be smashed up to get the fire going. Although it was the porters duty to try and keep the range going, well in Jammet's there were three ranges, in fact there were four, but they didn't have enough fuel to keep four going, they were working off three. So you had three open kind of fires. Now you had no way of controlling the heat coming from the top of them. It was imperative that you had lunch say at half twelve. If you had a stock pot or a soup on or whatever is that it was boiling at 12.10 at least to be ready for 12.30 and then of course to add to that then a very famous method of jagging up or jangling up the cooker, the stockpot and that was to lift it and throw a ladle of fat underneath it. And of course the smoke and everything, so the heat and that was intense but it wasn't below ground it was on the first floor on ground level.

110.**MM:** And would there have been fumes from the first as well?

111.**FF:** Oh you must be joking, fumes. Of course there were yes. So these are the things that made the task much more difficult. Like you know from the point of view of the environment within the kitchen today, today there is no comparison because you have complete control over your sources of heat today. I mean its all electric gas and I mean the very moment you don't want it you can switch it down and depend on if you want it at six come in at ten to six and turn it up. You couldn't do that. Those ranges had to be kept going all afternoon even though the place closed, the restaurant closed at 2 and opened again at 6. The ranges had to be kept going because for the night trade. So the kitchen never cooled down. You'd come in the morning and it was warm, quite warm in the morning cause they literally were burning overnight. A porter had to be in at 7 a.m. or 6.30 a.m. to start the range, to get the ranges going.

112.**MM:** And you talked there about the place. Was it all split shifts you worked or?

113.**FF:** Oh all split shifts yes because the restaurant, there was only the restaurant. They never did, very, very, rarely did a function and if they did a function it had to be a very small one because they only had a room that could take about twenty-four/thirty people. Very rare to do a function. Restaurant opened at 12.30 p.m. to lunch. Lunch would 12.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. and then from 6.00 p.m. until 10.00 p.m.

114.**MM:** And how many days a week would you do?

115.**FF:** Six. Sunday, it didn't open on Sunday. That was one advantage of restaurant work because it didn't open on Sundays as opposed to hotel. You'd have your one Sunday in three or one Sunday in two or whatever it was in hotels. But the menus and that were was an al la carte menu which basically never changed. It was a kind of a very set, very set kind of a la carte.

116.**MM:** With a good bit of choice.

117.**FF:** Reasonably good choice, yes. But what was the popular luncheon meal would be a plat de jour. They would put on the plat de jour and that would sell well at luncheon time. Basically well for two reasons like you know it wouldn't be as expensive as the a la carte menu and the other point would be it would be faster. You could go in and have a plat de jour rather rapidly and a cup of coffee and be off whereas once you were dining a la carte everything was from the time

you ordered you had to allow twenty minutes for your order because everything was done..... Nothing on the a la carte would be on tap. Nothing. Everything was fresh there was no such thing as frozen produce they hadn't come on the market at that time. But there would never be anything canned or preserved or of any nature. Everything, everything, consequently everything was in season. There was the season for everything, the game season, the fish season, the vegetable season, you could only have the various vegetables as they were in season.

118.**MM:** What was the style of food like you know? Was it the same sort of dishes, was it all French classical dishes?

119.**FF:** Yes. Based entirely on French classical cookery.

120.**MM:** And was that the same in most restaurants at that time? Like even when you went to Rossapenna and all?

121.**FF:** It would yeah. It would be all based on fresh yeah. Yes, yes, indeed. But we worked on the rota system. You'd have your, everything was made like you know your demi-glaze and your *espagnole* and all. They would be produced. So maybe on Monday they'd start producing every week, start producing say a demi-glaze. You know a demi-glaze would take about three days to make as you know because you'd have to start with brown your flour, bake your bones, blah, blah. Start and make your stocking, etc. and then all your reduction and so forth. So that would start on Monday and would continue on Tuesday and Wednesday and maybe on Tuesday then they would do then a tomato sauce. A basic tomato sauce and they'd make a container of it and when that cools down it would be put in the fridge and therefore they could pull on that during the week. All the basics. You'd have the basics of *espagnole*, demi-glaze, tomato, curry, fish and béchamel. So when individual a la carte order came in you could get your *sauteuse* and your ladle and build up your individual sauce from that. The fish *velouté* was the basic and then you added your cream, your milk or your wine. You worked it or if it was a ladle of tomato puree or whatever it was..... Each individual order was done that way. So the numbers couldn't be very great because. The numbers wouldn't be huge but proportionately it would be for its time, it would be expensive.

122.**MM:** Yeah, I believe it was quite expensive.

123.FF: Quite expensive. I mean I wouldn't like to quote prices or anything but it was expensive and as I say only all items available, only if they were available totally fresh. Everything had to be fresh except the game of course. That had to be.....

124.**MM:** That had to be..... and they liked it fairly high.

125.**FF:** Oh yes, indeed. It was a great house for game, like when the game season. You'd have the full range and you'd have the full range of game..

126.**MM:** And was it all from Ireland?

127.**FF:** It would be yes all local. It would come through a supplier maybe the McConnells of Grafton Street. They're gone now. They used to do fish/poultry/game. They were fairly high quality for supplier.

128.**MM:** Were Sayers there at the time?

129.**FF:** Sayers they were there. Byrne's of Chatham Street.

130.**MM:** I remember PJ had a story of using monkfish during the war and he'd cut them like for collops of lobster and he'd cut the scampi and all from the monkfish's tail (laugh). They used to wonder how he did it, how nowhere else in Dublin had all this fish during the war and all and he had it (laugh).

131. **FF:** Well there are tricks of the trade in every line aren't there however. Yes very, very about the house in Dublin if you wanted for those who want game you know and that because it would be available. Now the Jammets of course they used to buy in their wines in cask, bottle and blend themselves. So had a wine cellar below. That was in the cellar and they would do their own bottling and all like that.

132. **MM:** Was there something called, is it a hogsheads or something like that?

133. **FF:** A hogs head yes. A hogs head is a very large, its about twice the size of a barrel and they would come from of course from France. Hogs Heads. They'd be supplied through Mitchell's or some of those wine people you know.

134. **MM:** But they bottled and blended. So they would have blended maybe their house wine and stuff like that and then bottled it. Very good.

135. **FF:** Yeah. Oh yes. So wines would be, well they wouldn't have anything like the range of wines that's available today. But then again the particular period you'd have to keep coming back to the particular time that I'm speaking of. It's still all the war years. Everything was scarce. Transport, like you know. You just didn't ring a place and say get me, I want in such and such tomorrow. They may have it but they mightn't be able to get it to you for the next three weeks. You know, things were so terribly different. Terribly, terribly different.

136. **MM:** There was a thing called a Ki-ora. Do you remember that a drink? A thing called an Apollinaris as well or something like that. A Ki-ora. That's from menus I've seen now from probably 1928 so I don't know they may have gone by that stage.

137. **FF:** But Jammets eventually got an opposition. There was a restaurant opened in Suffolk Street, Frascatti's in Suffolk Street. The premises that it opened in was or is the premises now being used by the sports people.

138. **MM:** Oh Elvery's.

139. **FF:** Elvery's. Elvery's, the shop where Elvery's is at the moment. Now Frascatti's opened I think, the whole intention of it opening was to run in competition to Jammet's. Now of course at that particular time for those who had cars they could just come along and park them outside the door. Literally outside the door. There was no even going around the corner to park your car. You parked it outside the door, for those who had cars. And Frascatti's opened and there was people, they were Jews opened it. A Jewish group. Whytes, Jew.

140. **MM:** Now would that be the same Whytes that ended up as Whytes in the Green or would that be different?

141. **FF:** It's very possible. There could have been a connection between Whyte's the China showrooms or the China people that were in Wicklow Street. Whyte's. But however they fizzled out.

142. **MM:** How long did they last?

143. **FF:** They opened twice actually. They opened and they were there about a year or maybe eighteen months and they closed. Now the grapevine had it at the time that it was the staff that closed them you know (laugh) between the carry on and all the rest. But however they reopened. They restocked and reopened a second time and they still disappeared not too long after that. They were operating on very much the same level or wanting to operate on the very same level as Jammet's.

144.**MM:** Was the Red Bank opened at that stage?

145.**FF:** It was but it wasn't. You see the Red Bank, there were two Red Banks. There was a Red Bank that was a popular general kind of run-of-the-mill and they closed and then they opened as a first rate.

146.MM: Okay, both in the same place in D'Olier Street there.

147.FF: Yes the same premises. But they closed as the Red Bank. They closed and reopened on a much higher grade or level. Well that would have been around 1947 or so that they closed and reopened. But they only thing I remember about Frascatti's, one of the things was if you had a quiet night in Jammet's (laugh) someone would be sent out to run up and have a look into Frascatti's to see if they're busy. One of the things I feel that damaged Frascatti's was they were Jewish owned and the Jewish congregation started kind of using it. That's detrimental to a restaurant because well if the Jews establish themselves in a place other people don't go there.

148.**MM:** Right. Would have been, would that be the sort of anti-Semitism sort of thing or?

149.**FF:** Well yeah there was. I'd say they'd be a certain....

150.**MM:** Or was it just the Catholic thing or what was it?

151.**FF:** No, no, it's just the Jewish had the name of being the shylocks, the money lenders you know. A lot of other people wouldn't..... Like if it was known that the place was different they'd go somewhere else. I believe that's the only experience I would imagine happening here in Dublin but I believe like in London and places like that there were certain places that were frequented by Jews. They had to depend on there own trade.

152.**MM:** There would have been some difficulties in the cooking anyway, the kosher food and that sort of stuff.

153.**FF:** But sure a lot of Jews, a lot of Jews don't.

154.**MM:** I was going to ask you about that. You were saying about the various people who were coming in Indian princes and that sort of stuff. Would there have been any special diets or any special..... Or any special?

155.**FF:** No, no. A lot of these people once they were away (laugh), once they were away they just row in. These things only apply when their in their own circles you know. I'd say like a lot of people who wouldn't meat here on a Friday at the time if they were in London or in Paris or something wouldn't stop to think whether it was Friday or not.

156.**MM:** But tell me was there much meat eaten on. Like would you have meat on the menu on a Friday or.....

157.**FF:** Yes there would.

158.**MM:** But the black fasting that was still quite strong back then though was it?

159.**FF:** Well it was, it was but not in the clientele of the upper echelons you know. So it wouldn't effect. Like if you were working in an average hotel like the Central or the Dolphin or something like that just of course two names, not saying that they were particularly, but the run-of-the-mill types of places, Friday would stand out as a very low meat day. But it wouldn't affect like maybe in so much in the Shelbourne, Hibernian, in the Russell, Jammet's or that type of thing you know. Different clientele. So that's where I ran into Paddy (P.J. Dunne) and he eventually of course went into Cathal Brugha Street then and he.....

160.**MM:** Where did PJ train? Was he in Jammet's for many a year?

161.**FF:** He was a good few years. He was there long before, well I don't know exactly, well a good while before I was there which would be 1945 and he was there into well into the '50s, well into the '50s. He didn't go into Cathal Brugha Street probably until the '60s. He was a.....

162.**MM:** You don't remember where he trained or?

163.**FF:** I don't, I don't know like his particular background prior to being in Jammet's. I don't quite know. (**note**. PJ Dunne was from Laois and trained in the Shelbourne Hotel before working in Jammet's)

164.**MM:** But you moved on then anyway from Jammet's in 1948.

165.**FF:** Yeah, well at the end of your six years I was in Jammet's and of course the guy came along and well said your time is up you know. Basically what they'd be saying as well you can stay if you want to stay but you'd stay on the level you're on. And I having enjoyed a nice season in Bundoran couple of years prior to that and having done two-and-a-half of nearly three years of the rough stuff in Jammet's I decided I'd go out and I went to the Isle of Man. I went as *sous chef* to a hotel in the Isle of Man, the Marlborough Hotel. Now not a very big hotel and after three years in Jammet's, like you know, a season in the Isle of Man was a pushover (laugh) It was like a holiday. I went over there to relax for a couple of months and when I came back from that season then I went to the Red Bank as *chef de partie.* And then I was in the Red Bank from that 1948 into 1953.

166.**MM:** Who owned the Red Bank?

167.**FF:** Now Montgomery Brothers. The Montgomery Brothers, one of them Niall Montgomery and one was a barrister and the other was an accountant. So they were involved in the Red Bank. Now this would be from the time that they bought the Red Bank when it was down and out.

168.**MM:** Yeah, middle of the road, yeah.

169.**FF:** Down and out and they closed it and revamped it and they weren't hoteliers or restaurateurs, they were business men. It was a sideline investment from maybe off the income taxes they should have been paying or whatever, I don't know (laugh).

170.**MM:** Yeah, yeah.

171.**FF:** One was an accountant and the other was a barrister/lawyer. So they were the owners and they didn't play any particular part in the actual running of it. There was a man there when I went to it the manager was a Georgy Ennis. Now he had been manager in the old Red Bank and they kept him on.

172.**MM:** George Ennis is it?

173.**FF:** George Ennis. Georgy was a character. He was a youngish man but he was a real come-day-go-day, you know?

174.**MM:** Was he a Dublin man?

175.**FF:** No, I don't know exactly where he came from. But activities outside of the restaurant were pretty high on agenda. So when there be any events like, Georgy wasn't to be found. One aspect of him, he was tipping around and motor cycling and that type of thing but the type he was that he entered the Skerries 100, one year on a borrowed bicycle, borrowed leathers, borrowed

helmet (laugh). You know the type of character. He eventually left. Now when I say he left, he left the Red Bank. He went off and I do know he was involved up at what is now the junction of the Longmile Road and the Naas Road. It was kind of a pavilion there and a bit of a restaurant and he was running that. Now he was running it but of all the people he eventually went off and went to Milltown Park and became a Jesuit Priest.

176.**MM:** No way, yeah?

177.**FF:** Of all the people that you ever expected that would be.....

178.**MM:** You'd never put your money on him.

179.**FF:** I eventually, a few years after that the next thing we knew he was in Milltown Park and he was studying and he became a Jesuit Priest.

180.**MM:** Who was the chef at the time?

181.**FF:** The chef in it was a man by the name of Retty. Jean Retty. He was French and after.....

182.**MM:** Who was head chef in Jammet's?

183.**FF:** Marc Faure.

184.**MM:** Oh Marc Faure but was he French as well.

185.**FF:** He was. Marc Faure. Now Jean Retty was a different.

186.**MM:** And how about the *sous chef*? Were the *sous chefs* Irish or were they.....

187.**FF:** Yes Irish, Gerry Ferns was a *sous chef.*

188.**MM:** In Jammet's was it?

189.**FF:** No in the Red Bank.

190.**MM:** Who was in Jammets?

191.**FF:** In Jammets, Hoffman. Armar Hoffman.

192.**MM:** Did he know 'Babby' Hoffman?

193.**FF:** Not that I know. Hoffman was *sous chef.*

194.**MM:** Oh sorry it was Gerry and the *sous chef.*

195.**FF:** Gerry Ferns he was Irish. He lived just down the road here. Down the end of Malahide Road. So after Ennis leaving the Red Bank, Retty became the Manager, he took over as Manager and Gerry Ferns took over as *chef de cuisine.* Now it ran pretty much, you know fairly much on the same level as Jammet's but a little more looser, a little more not quite so formal like and the clientele would be a little more you might say average kind of business type people you know. Well it was run on the same principles as Jammet's. Menus were fairly comparable and you could have no item unless it was fresh and then we had a very good..... There was a Dunn's fish suppliers in D'Olier Street just up the corner where the Gas Company is. Dunn's were fish suppliers. The Mr. Dunn was, had an interest in the Red Bank. Now not in the running of it or anything but he was a Director.

196.**MM:** He had a financial interest in it, yeah?

197.**FF:** Yes and they supplied all the fish, poultry, game or anything that was required because they had their stand or they had their….. They'd be down in the markets first thing every morning and they would do the purchasing for us so we wouldn't know what was coming. What was going at the right price and what was good quality and so forth, they'd buy and they'd be sent in, brought into us, we'd open, the kitchen started at say 9 a.m., say it would be 10 a.m. before they'd arrive so at 10 a.m. you'd have to compose your menu for the day because depending on what came in. Because they had a fish bar in the Red Bank down. They had a fish bar where they served, wouldn't serve anything but fish. If it was a soup service it had to be a chowder, smoked salmon, blah, blah, blah and that. All meals, they stuck to that rigidly. And if a party of five came in and there was one wanted meat, they'd say sorry they wouldn't serve you. The five would have to go to the dining room. They served fish in the dining room as well but they wouldn't serve the one meat in the fish bar. They kept that tradition. So the menus had to be written then at 10 a.m. in the morning or whatever time the fish would arrive at. So therefore the menus there changed every day.

198.**MM:** Was there any strange fish served like or was it all the usual…..

199.**FF:** Mostly prawns, lobster, sole, cod. No not…..

200.**MM:** Like what about monkfish, john dory, anything like that, they wouldn't have been much of that?

201.**FF:** No, oddly enough no. You see whether the fishermen were discarding because there wasn't a market for it, they weren't bringing it in. That's possible. Now the Red Bank of course were famous for their oysters and that's where the Red Bank gets the name 'Red Bank' from the Red Bank of the oyster fields off the coast of Clare and those oyster fields, that's the name of them. The Red Bank and that's where the Red Bank gets the name from the source of their oysters……..Now as I say things were improved, had been improving now because now we're up to the stage that you had gas ranges and electric deep fat fryers and like we wouldn't be dependent on coal ranges you know. Things were moving on and you had usual sort of mixers and mincers and that available which weren't available say back in Rossapenna. One interesting story I'll tell you about if I revert back to Jammet's for a moment. Jammet's had very little equipment; there were no electric beaters or mixers. Everything like that would be done by hand and there was a manager in Jammet's who didn't take much part in the running of the actual restaurants as such but I'd say he was up in the office doing the dockets and there was awful lot of reports to be done in those days but all the dockets had to be matched by hand. Because one docket came to the kitchen, one docket went to the cashier and then they had to….. So there was a lot of work. Now he was a former Chef. Besson was his name. He happened to be the same name as Besson in the Hibernian but there was no connection. But he was antiquated in his attitude and they decided at one stage to get a mixer and so they got a twenty quart, a twenty quart Hobart floor standing model. You know there quite common but they were new at that time. Besson comes along one day, early in the afternoon and I was going between the grill upstairs to the kitchen or whatever and this blender was upstairs. I must have been on *chef de garde* that day. Besson comes along and he looks over his glasses and he sees the mixer and he calls me. 'Look, look a monument to laziness' (Laugh).

202.**MM:** That was the mentality, 'a monument to laziness' (laugh).

203.**FF:** 'A monument to laziness' (laugh). So you can see this was around the time things were, this was 1945 or 1946 or 1947. The war was just over, things were beginning to..starting to change. Yeah. That was his….. He wouldn't have it at all. Of course what he was thinking was that the bill or the account for that would land on his desk. However Red Bank, going back to the Red Bank they had the fish bar and a lounge downstairs and then they had the front bar which was a fruit bar and then the restaurant and then the cocktail bar upstairs. Luncheon bar in the front. It

was the forerunner really to the pub grub today you know, which was unusual at the time. A thing I just want to mention to you about I've always felt that the hotels, now, as the hotels through the Hotels Federation or whatever it be, I think they lost out very, very heavily in not moving with the times in serving snacks and fast meals. You know like that. Right up to the very end they resisted. Luncheon was from 12 to 2 and between 12 and 2 or 2.30 they wouldn't serve a sandwich anywhere. You were selling against yourself. And they wouldn't serve food in the bar, you'd have to go to the restaurant or you'd have to go to the dining room. You seen things were changing but what, the penny never dropped with them. You needed a licence to serve liqueur or beer, alcohol but you didn't need a licence to serve food. But they had the licences but the publicans didn't need a licence to serve food and the publicans started serving food. And they took an awful lot of trade from the hotels.

204.**MM:** When did the publicans start serving food? I know your saying now that the Red Bank was sort of a precursor to it.

205.**FF:** It would be yeah. That would be somewhere that would be kind of unique. So this would be one of the things that made the Red Bank unique. That and the fish bar.

206.**MM:** So the thing is but the Red Bank had a full bar licence. So it acted very much as a bar as well as a restaurant as well as sort of a fish bar?

207.**FF:** It was the only bar in Dublin literally serving full meals over the counter. Now I'm talking about early '50s. Now it would be towards the late '50s that things really started moving, in the early '60s that the pubs start serving meals. Through the 1960s into the 1970s and of course today they have the better part of the.....

208.**MM:** Of the restaurant, the business, the market, yeah, yeah.

209.**FF:** Very much so. I think the hotels as catering establishments; they lost out on that one. They should have developed that. Sure they already had the bars. They already had the lounges and those lounges very often right through lunch time were lying idle.

210.**MM:** They didn't have foresight.

211.**FF:** No. I always blame themselves for that, that they did loose out.

212.**MM:** What was the Red Bank like, like the décor and all, like was it like a brasserie or something like that or what was it like?

213.**FF:** Yes. Yeah, yeah but for its time it would be reasonably upmarket for its time. But they had the high stools around the front of the bar and they'd be a nice. I can't, wouldn't say it was marble but it was a high polished wooden and nice brass foot rails and then they would have a table or two seated under the window at the back. The bar, the window was out onto to D'Olier Street with an entrance on each side and the bar ran parallel to and they'd be a few tables out there in the bar. But the numbers that they would do wouldn't have been huge, not by today's wouldn't be huge. You know cause with the turnover like between 12 and 2.30 you might have three turnovers. Three sittings whereas same thing in the restaurant you wouldn't get two in with the formality and see the thing about the, wait till I..... it was still silver service. They still brought it down on silver. They had there plate warmers below but it became the first of the informal, informal like, they got the dishes and just..... There wasn't the formality of the silver service. You know putting it on the side lamp and making.....

214.**MM:** They didn't make a performance out of it as such.

215.**FF:** No they just brought down the plates (making motions as scraping it off the silver tray onto a plate). But they would get three sittings like and well if you had ten people, nine, ten

people sitting across the bar that would be thirty and maybe forty-five or fifty over the luncheon period you know. Again now it was, it wouldn't have been regarded as like the average person wouldn't go in. The price menu would, the prices would deter them. Now the luncheon, the restaurant wouldn't do a huge luncheon trade, most of the luncheon trade was done either in the fish bar or in the front bar.

216.**MM:** Was there many tourists around at that stage or?

217.**FF:** No, no. Tourism hadn't got off.

218.**MM:** It was really the '60s was it or?

219.**FF:** Oh it was well into the '60s touching towards the '70s. Even Aer Lingus they weren't up and going at that time. Sure the government of the day wasn't it at the very early '60s bought the planes and the next government coming in sold them. (Laugh) Fianna Fail government bought three aircrafts and the government changed and Fine Gael government came in and I think they had Labour back in their coalition and they flogged off the three aircrafts before Aer Lingus got going at all. So tourism as we know it hadn't gotten off the ground. You'd get some holiday makers mostly from England, Scotland, Wales. You'd get some French and that because there were ferries coming directly from France into Rosslare. Not a huge tourist trade as such. Bord Fáilte was only kind of starting up. So it was mostly a local trade, like you had people out of The (Irish) Times across the road, good customers were most of the Directors out of the Hammond Lane Foundry which was down in Pearse St. Again you see at that time you could hop into your car. By this stage cars were becoming more popular. But you could still come up and drive into D'Olier Street, go down one side, turn around and come up and park outside the Red Bank. As long as you didn't stop at a bus stop you were all right. There was no other, they weren't huge numbers of cars but they were coming, they were coming on at this stage but one of the Kavanaghs. Do you know Willie Kavanagh?

220.**MM:** Yeah, yeah.

221.**FF:** Well now his brother was Head Waiter in the Red Bank.

222.**MM:** This is the man that went on to work for PV Doyle afterwards was it?

223.**FF:** Yes.

224.**MM:** Yeah. I forget his name but I have his name written down.

225.**FF:** Willie, Eddie. There were three Kavanaghs, Willie, Eddie.

226.**MM:** PV, he named a room, he named a restaurant room after him in one of his hotels I believe. (**note:** Eddie or Eamon Kavanagh was in the Red Bank as head waiter, his brother Robert worked for P.V. Doyle and after his early death, the dining room in the Montrose Hotel was named 'The Robert Room')

227.**FF:** Well, I was in the Red Bank from 1948 to 1953 and then I went off to the Central, back to the Central. Now at that stage the Central had been upgraded and Bill Marshall who had been in the Shelbourne was chef and I went off to the Central as *sous chef*. Now the Central was a fairly busy house, resident wise, function wise, luncheon trade wise, evening trade was fairly, quite brisk. Now the Hewitt Motors, they were the main Directors of the Central and the Manager there came up from the Wicklow, it will come to me in a few minutes, and it was a fairly good function trade and all the rest. So I was there for, but not on quite the same level as the Red Bank or Jammet's like you know, more.....

228.**MM:** More middle of the road. Not as fancy.

229.**FF:** It was very good from the point of view of being *sous chef* because every time Marshall turned his back you were there and of course when he went on holidays and all the rest, you were doing the menus, you were doing, you know, so that's a *sous chef* so it was good from that point. Yeah. Peter Huntley came up from the, he was Manager. So I was there from 1953 then to 1958 and having done what five years as *sous chef* I said well Frank its time you put your act together. Getting old as this stage. I was moving on and I, there was a head waiter that had been in the Central and had gone out to Malahide, as head waiter, I forget his name, it won't come to me, and he rang me one day and he said their looking for a chef out here in Malahide. So I trotted around, well because it was time I made a move somewhere, so I went out to see the fellow there.

End of Tape One

Figure FF.1: Frank Farren with Model of The Grand Hotel Malahide

230.**MM:** The Grand in Malahide, yeah.

231.**FF:** Now it was a busy establishment, there is no question of that. Cause because things were beginning to move at this stage, this was 1958.

232.**MM:** But that was very much a beacon on the Northside wasn't it. It was very much out on its own.

233.**FF:** It was, there was virtually no other catering establishments within.

234.**MM:** Basically you had the airport at the time.

235.**FF:** The airport.

236.**MM:** And nothing else was it.

237.**FF:** No. Very, very little else except down into country club down in Portmarnock. Things were beginning to buzz on the tourist side and things were beginning to move locally. People were beginning to earn more, mix around more, dine out more, blah, blah. Things were on the move and I was there from 1958 to 1972. Now it was a Whelan, Paddy Whelan was the Head Waiters name that, he had been in the Central but he had also worked in the Hibernian in his day. I knew him from the short period I was in the Hibernian. So.....

238.**MM** You used to do a lot of weddings out there.

239.**FF** A fierce number of weddings.

240.**MM** There was dances as well, was there?

241.**FF:** Oh they'd be evening dancing yes, dinner dances. One week we had a record for weddings, in one week, wait till I think now, I just want to be careful here, roundabout thirty-eight weddings in one week. Now, so the proprietor was McCabe, Luke McCabe. Now he had the bar in Dame Street, just beside the Olympia Theatre.

242.**MM**: Is that one where Brogans is now?

243.**FF:** I think that's the same one. Now he sold that and he bought the Malahide. Now the Malahide had been in the hands of a Mrs. Murray for years and they weren't doing anything. So he revamped it to, and then he got in with Bord Fáilte and so forth and put forward plans for development so a huge development took place in 1961. Well the building was actually during 1960 into 1961. It was a busy house, very busy but there was one thing about it was that when you had your kitchen there, you had your kitchen and there wasn't anyone to.....

244.**MM:** You were you own boss as such.

245.**FF:** Well between myself. I can say it without any fear, between myself and the Head Waiter and the bar, between us pulling together, we ran the business because Luke McCabe died in 1964. He died of cancer and by degrees then from that period his wife took over. She took over but she didn't take over. That was the pity of it. She left it. She left it to the Manager but yet she didn't let the Manager manage. You can get a fair (idea), she didn't let the Manager manage and yet she wanted people to be responsible but did not give them the authority to be responsible. And things began to shade back. Well of course as well as that there were other establishments opening, other hotels, other restaurants all around North County Dublin and so forth.

246.**MM**: Would Opperman have opened up in Malahide around that stage? Would that have been the 1970s?

247.**FF:** No he was into the 1970s. He opened up, it would have been into 1970s. That was after me. I was there until 1972, now he was later. But it was very busy but it was self-satisfying like. You got great satisfaction out of it like. If you were interested in your work you developed systems to suit the place there to make it run easier - systems for ordering and controlling and so forth.

248.**MM:** Would you have developed them yourself now or would you have?

249.**FF:** No developed them ourselves. I tell you I developed a system for ordering from the stores and stock levels and all of that and I sat down one day, I was signing in a docket and it was in the early stages of computing and the delivery docket, although there was only maybe two items on it but it was a sheet of so big, and your two items were just ticked off so I sat down and looked, why

all this here, because up to that like most items were just written on the individual docket in handwriting. So it struck me like, right so this system really means that all you've got to do is when you want to dispatch something, you just go down along and you tick off the item and you tick off the amount in another column. So I said why don't I do that for the store? So I devised a system whereby all the items in the stores were listed and what would be the normal unit that you would draw out so put everything into units and what would be the normal unit that you would draw out and put in, so therefore tomorrow's order from the stores would be pinned up today. Now if anyone around the kitchen in the various departments found they were running low they quantity that should be in stock in the kitchen would be on the list and if they saw like I should have five tins of peaches just for example. They'd look and they'd see well after last night usage and all the rest we have only two-and-a-half so I need three tomorrow to bring me back to stock level. So each individual could just go and tack in their requirement and then that would go to the stores in the morning so therefore they should be back up to stock level you see. The next day's sheet carried over what was got out yesterday. So the sheet at the end of the week showed what you got out for the week. And then there was a column then that the storekeeper could cost, put in their costing and then you ran that then to the end of the month, so at the end of the month the last requisition sheet from the kitchen showed not only what you got out on the last day but what you got out in the previous thirty days.

250.**MM:** Very good.

251.**FF:** Do you follow?

252.**MM:** Yeah, I do yeah.

253.**FF:** So when you got the last sheet and it came to, talk again about peaches, eight tins of whatever, on the last day you didn't get any out but for the thirty days previous to that you had got out sixty-five tins. Now, then I put numbers on them and then the numbers then I asked them in the stores to stack not under their category but under their number so any individual who didn't even know where a tin of peaches was could be sent to the stores and get a tin of peaches cause go down and get me two number 5s or get me two number 6s so therefore at night when the stores would be closed you could get the commis and give him keys and tell him go down and get you two number 7's. And all they'd have to do is go along the shelf, they'd come to number 7, they wouldn't know from Adam what it was, the supermarkets are doing it today. Checkouts at the supermarkets, they don't have a clue what there handling.

254.**MM:** Yeah I know they just put them through.

255.**FF:** Yeah, so systems like that, I enjoyed that to do that and I got that working. I used to keep a diary of all the functions and with a result then as the years went by you get the same functions coming in, at the same time of the year. I could look up now maybe and see well now next month we're going to have the yacht club, we're going to have the golf club, we're going to have and I could tell in approximately what date they were going to us and what number they were last year. So you could hazard a good guess. So keeping files like that I was always ahead of posse. And for stock ordering and all of that, you see I could order in advance for what I know, what I'd require so that it would be in stock two days before I'd need it so you could start and get your preparation done you know. But you were left alone there was no accountant or somebody coming down from the office above to oversee any of that. You just did that yourself.

256.**MM:** And you weren't rewarded for gross profits or anything like this or there was no percentage of this or the other?

257.**FF:** Well there was a percentage system and you'd get a bonus based on that.

258.**MM:** What were wages like though? Like as a head chef would you be comfortable?

259.**FF:** You'd be earning twenty-four or twenty-five pounds. That was fairly. Like you're talking about the 1960s, early 60s and I remember the sensation of the time was when a friend, he was in the Metropole, he was at one time *sous chef* in the Metropole went down to the Clarence and he was.....

260.**MM:** Marley was it.

261.**FF:** No, Marley. It was after Marley's time. But the big sensation at the time was that he was gone down there at...This was much later now. I'm talking about much nearly to the end of my term, that he was down there for five thousand a year, you know, a hundred a week, wow. I can't think of his name again. But that was earth breaking, shattering at the time. Ah no, no, the past twenty years things have erupted. (**note.** David Edwards is the chef he is talking about)

262.**MM:** Like a chefs job was considered okay but it was nothing special. You'd be considered working class or upper working class (laugh).

263.**FF:** Upper working class yes.

264.**MM:** How were you considered, like was the position of a chef within society?

265.**FF:** Well within the trade, you generally were referred to as 'Chef'. Certainly within the hotel you were 'Chef'. You were never referred to by your name. And its only in more recent years like that the term 'chef' has been derogated to nothing. Everyone is chef now. Everyone is chef. Like really something should have to be done about that. I've been on to them in the Panel, they should be trying to re-establish like. The term 'chef' now is used for everything. Which is basically wrong, because you know the term chef is chief. Now there can only be one chief. Now you can be chief of anything, you can be chief of a whole range of things but it has to be chef of something and not just chef. But everyone now that steps inside the kitchen now is a chef.

266.**MM:** So then did you move from Malahide then to go to Galway was it.

Figs FF.2 (a): Brian Lenihan with Model of Liberty Hall (b) Frank Farren

267.**FF:** Yeah. Well I applied for Galway and I had applied at one stage for Cathal Brugha Street (Catering College), the time that Jimmy Kilbride was appointed. I applied at that particular time.

That must have been around late 1960s. This came up for Galway, well I was becoming very conscious myself at this time that within the trade itself you were kind of at the end of the road in so much where did you go from being *chef de cuisine* unless you went to chef in another. But you see these establishments, like you were only going to be there for ten, twelve, fifteen years. They weren't pensionable and so forth so that's why I made the effort for Cathal Brugha Street. I applied for Cathal Brugha Street and at that time Jimmy Kilbride was appointed. So I applied for Galway in 1972 and I didn't get it. Now, Galway were only setting up and so there were about three or four, four appointments at that level. But you see Des Maher had been in Athenry, someone else had been in Maynooth, so they had some teaching backgrounds you see so they kind of got preference. But when I delved into like there were one or two others that you would say were on the same level as myself and I kind of delved into and I knew Des Maher well because I used to go to Cathal Brugha Street, to Athenry, he was the Chef Instructor in Athenry and I used to go there to do the City and Guilds or to do the CERT exams and I got to know him well and he was seconded to Galway and after applying I was talking to him and he said like you know well he had felt out the field as it were and one of the reasons was, they always had a great difficulty and still have in appointments in the Colleges and the Institutes now of equating the equivalent. Like you have a certification or equivalent. Well you see now there were no certifications at that time. There was no one coming in with certifications at that time so the equivalents were always a problem and he said like one of the problems that they had was that I had only been a *chef de cuisine* in one establishment.

268. **MM:** Right, yeah, yeah.

269. **FF:** And that doesn't exactly prove yourself. So I said well I'd better do something very quick. I better see that I have more than one establishment. So Michael Marley was in CERT at the time and he was doing work around the country like in the hotels and at some of these meetings or other like you know, curriculum developments or some of those, I was involved in that with Cert, curriculum development and so forth and he said to me, I think he read the scene that I was long enough in Malahide type of thing. He said there looking for a chef in the Longford Arms Hotel in Longford. There after doing a vast, really updating, really in a big way. They did, they revamped the whole place, they upgraded the whole place.

270. **MM:** Now Albert (Reynolds) had at this stage, had he.

271. **FF:** Yeah. No it's the brother.

272. **MM:** Oh the brother had it.

273. **FF:** Would you be interested? Well I was because and it had to be something quick. I couldn't say well I'll wait until next year or the year after. So I said well. So I went down to see them. A big help there was you see there was a house, a house available, a full house. Not living in house cause you see the brother was also a builder. And he had built this place down in, a scheme of houses down the road and two of them were kept for staff in the hotel. So there was a house available. So I went down, and like that too breaking new ground and so forth. It was a challenge. So Galway came up again the next year, I think there were two more posts advertised for the next year. So I applied and I went back to see them and I got an appointment so then the big thing then was I had to move to Galway but there was no house available (laugh). Salaries in the scheme at the time at College Teacher level, they weren't particularly great, I don't know about the current climate.

274. **MM:** There not particularly great at the moment at college teacher level either, starting off, you know when you start off.

275. **FF:** But I had a particular problem also that I had family living here you see. We'd three sons. Now the eldest was too old at this stage to say you're coming to Galway. Now the other two you could because they could change schools and as I said to you earlier the youngest lad was

only a nip. So it was a question of providing myself, well we providing ourselves with a house in Galway and not relinquishing this one. That wasn't easy I can tell you. It wasn't easy to do that and I was two years commuting from 1973 to 1975 before we got established in Galway and then of course Summer seasons and all the rest I'd be back here. I'd have to throw my lot in with whatever I could get. I had to.

276.**MM:** Keep the wolf from the door. And where would have done those?

277.**FF:** I did with Carroll Catering and that, what I did was I got Carroll Catering. I don't know, I saw an advertisement or something done up. Wanted Chef/Manager but I went and had a chat with them and so what the Manager said to me. I'll tell you what I'll do he said, I'll use you for holiday relief but I'll keep you in the one place. And I'll shift whoever was in that place to relieve others. So I went over and I was in the Cement Roadstone place over in Fitzwilliam. Now they had a fairly, a good, the levels of catering differed in the different factories, jam factories and so forth you know. Very mundane type of stuff. This was reasonable you know. But not big numbers you'd only do about thirty-five-forty lunches. So that was kind of a doddle and I was in the one place and then he was ringing me then to know when would I be coming back up the next season. So I was left in the one, I didn't move from place to place. He moved some of his permanent staff. He knew if he moved from place to place I'd have walked it. Because you know you walk into those place of a Monday morning and they'd be nothing done. You'd be cleaning the saucepans from Friday you know. So I did a few terms with Carroll Catering. I had to.

278.**MM:** Tell me something now, you, the Panel of Chefs you were very much involved in the setting up of that or very early on anyway.

279.**FF:** Well the Panel in 1958 and it came into being because there was a catering exhibition planned for/ to run in conjunction with a festival that was, was it the *Tóstal*? And Michael Mullen like had been approached. All trades were approached like on an all business to put on something for the festival and it was decided to put on a catering exhibition in Busáras. It happened in Busáras and all down around the basement but they had no group so they formed a grouping of *chef de cuisines* that were affiliated to the union.

Figure FF.3: Frank Farren awaded Prize, Michael Mullen in the Centre

280.**MM:** Now Micky Mullen he was branch secretary to the Number Four Branch at the time.

281.**FF:** Yeah and that's where the Panel started. Of course everything in the unions is the Panel. This Panel and that Panel, the Waiters Panels and this Panel so it just became know as the Panel of Chefs. I was always after them to drop the Panel and just call it the Chefs of Ireland you know but that beside the point. But I was involved you see in the Union being on chef's committees and on the branch committees.

282.**MM:** Like when did you start getting involved in the union?

283.**FF:** From the time I was in the Red Bank so that was 1948, 1949, 1950, so this was 1958. For about seven years I'd been involved in chef's committees and branch committees and so forth and I knew Michael Mullen and I got to know Michael Marley, and Michael Ganly, of course he was deep into the unions. He was in everything that was in the unions. The union band, he was secretary to the union band. He was involved in it.

284.**MM:** But there was a strong link between most of the chefs at the time and the union. You got your jobs through the union and such and that's where you went.

285.**FF:** That's what I was saying. There was no certification at the time. You had been a union member and they could show that you'd done the apprenticeship and they had a track of where you had been so they could recommend you to another, different. It was very touching but you were either in or you were out. I had decided at an early age, at an early stage you were better in than out. So I made it my business when they were looking for a chef's committee, oh I'll sit on a chef's committee, oh I'll sit on a branch committee. It meant passing some of your afternoons when you had breaks to go down to a meeting rather than going home but you get to know the different people inside and you got to know Michael Mullen and so forth. So that's where the Panel started and around about 1963 there was a function. It was 1963, some branch of the union, they had a conference out in Malahide, it must have been the Transport and General Worker's Union Conference. Two or three day conference or whatever it is and a function at the end of it but after that the next time I was down in the union, Michael came to me and asked me would I be interested in being involved in the Panel. So I could see that if I was aiming for, I was aiming at the time like to move out of the industry as such if I could into the CERT side of thing, if a Chef/Instructor had to come up for CERT I would have been applying for it like. For getting out of the trade as such because I was getting to the stage, there's nothing at the end of this.

286.**MM:** You'd gone as far as you could go sort thing, yeah.

287.**FF:** Yeah. So I said yes I would like to be involved because again you're better in than out. So I took up with the panel at that time. At that time it was a fairly loose group and it hadn't any direct constitution or aims. It was just there to be used as it were for like a catering exhibition coming up that each individual would round up someone in the hotels to an exhibition and that type of thing and then when CERT were very early on coming in you see and you had Anna Carroll moving into CERT. Now she was an academic. She had no hotel background but she was Director of setting up a whole training scheme for the industry both like dining room, kitchen you name it. So Anna had no background so like approaches were made to the Panel to meet with CERT and help formulate committees to work on curriculum development and like CERT, like Anna and her cohorts they were only feeling their way and they had no where else to go. So I got involved in as much as CERT work as I possibly could because I could see.....This is the future. These are the people now who have the purse strings. These are the people who hold the grants, these are the people now, at that time it was only the City and Guilds, they weren't doing a CERT examination in the colleges when they opened first, they were doing the City and Guilds but because you were involved in CERT, they were nominating people to go and do.

288.**MM:** External examiner and such, yeah.

289.**FF:** So I became an external examiner so therefore I was getting connection into the existing colleges not the regional colleges they hadn't been build. Into Athenry, into Maynooth, into Rockwell you see. Then of course then they came and built the regional colleges and then things started to move. I always felt that there was two things wrong with building the regional colleges. They built them about fifteen years two late for me and they should have built them all up in the Phoenix Park.

290.**MM:** (Laugh).

291.**FF:** That would have suited me grand (laugh). So they should have built them all up in the Phoenix Park and fifteen years earlier I'd have been delighted. However, it meant going to Galway, it could well have been Waterford, it could well have been Cork. It's where it came up, is where it came up. So I got involved with the Panel and part of the Panel involvement was working with the food people in the industry and doing demonstrations for different products and all of that. So it was an experience to go and do a demo you know whereas like it was like doing your work on the other side of the hot cupboard you know. So it's all experience and it brings you in touch with the people in the food industry outside like the Knorr's, Erin. You get to know them. So it broadens your..... So that's how I got involved with the Panel and I stuck with the Panel then and I eventually I was President from 1984-1986. Now during my Presidency, prior to that the national catering exhibition and all the competitions were run by the CEA, the Catering Equipment Association. And they had there stamp on all those cause they run them in conjunction with there catering exhibition. But I felt that that wasn't the thing because of course what your doing was all the certification and everything went out in the name of CEA and it was the Panel of Chef doing all the background work. So I had, while in Malahide and while in Galway we had been thinking in the Galway branch of the Panel, because the Panel broke off into branches and the Galway branch was considering an outlet for their publicity. Like you know we have to move out and we're a panel. What are we doing? The public wouldn't know about us and we said there should be a local catering exhibition. So we went down to see John Carney, he was Manager down in McCambridge's. We just put a proposition to him. Look if we were prepared to run catering exhibitions in the line of competitions and a couple of demonstrations and all that sort of thing would McCambridges and such be interested sponsoring it. So he was involved also with National Wholesale. McCambridges were involved with National Wholesale so he said yes we would and so we set up the West of Ireland Catering Exhibition and it's still running. It's into its twelfth or fourteenth bi-annual exhibition so it's running twenty-four years. So we ran that out in Salthill a couple of times and then we ran it in the Great Southern. Each year, every second year we had to look for a venue. It went on, it wasn't huge but it was fairly good standard and particularly local traders, started taking stands and that in it. So McCambridge's weren't loosing money on it but yet they were..... So through that connection you see I said to John Carney, I said I'll tell you what I'm interested in, I want to get the competitions, the catering competitions that the Panel are running out from under the CEA. I said if it was possible would there be scope for National Wholesale to back us? I said 'we don't have to be on a big scale to do this in the first instance', so I went to see National Wholesale up here in Dublin and I put it to them and I said look the numbers of stands and all of that won't be great but at the time we were talking buttons, we weren't talking big money. Because we were getting individual people to sponsor the individual competitions so you were getting a hundred or a hundred-and-fifty from them for each competition. Do you follow? So the rest of it we'll run at a low cost. So I got their backing. We didn't have a venue, we didn't anything but at the local West of Ireland Competition the day that the CEA were down there cause they go to all these exhibitions so there was a little reception at the end, I got up and just off the top of them, I said as President, while I have a captive audience I would just like to announce the Panel are going to run the competitions that were formally the National Catering Exhibition under the title of 'Chef Ireland'. Now at the time it wasn't even copper fastened. So having made the commitment we went out and we came back and we looked for, myself and Michael Ganly, he was Secretary at the time. So we went off looking for venues, we tried Malahide because they had build a new.

292.**MM:** Ballroom and that.

293.**FF:** But it was quite suitable. There were two floors but they wanted too much. We tried the racetrack out in Naas, we tried a couple of places, the Burlington, the Burlington was quite suitable also. So we wound in the Green Isle and they were quite reasonable and a quite a big room. We ran the first Chef Ireland out there on the same years the catering equipment were running there competition. On the opposite year to the one in Galway. So you had the National and the Regional and that's where Chef Ireland took off and they ran their competition, we did it two years out in the Green Isle and they ran there next competition without the Panel involvement and it was a washout so they came to us around 1987 or so in negotiation so we said we'd go back in but that we were part of the exhibition. That it would be the National Catering Exhibition and Chef Ireland. So that was it really. So that's how it went off. So I can claim that much anyway, that put it on a pretty good footing and we put a pretty heavy price on it, a hefty price, that well covered us, more than covered us for our costs and we were sitting opposite them and we didn't give a damn whether they went for it or not because we'd still go ahead and do our thing the following year again. So they bit the dust. They succumbed. So that's where that thing took off. So that was my involvement.

294.**MM:** I was thinking there, that you mentioned before that there was a famous striker, that there may have been a few strikes.

295.**FF:** There was a strike in 1951. In most houses in town, it was the time that there was a strike to introduce the service charge. The service charge. Now it was very bitter. In some houses, I was in the Red Bank at the time it lasted a fortnight. In a number of houses it lasted a fortnight but in some of them it lasted nine months. Now houses like the Central, I know they lasted. The Central went on for nine months. It was very bitter.

296.**MM:** What exactly was behind it?

297.**FF:** It was you see, basically the waiting people were seeking a rise and they were refused a rise. What they were looking for was pay, an average workers pay. Now they were on pretty small pay because.....

298.**MM:** They used to get tips was it?

299.**FF:** Gratuities really, they were always being told gratuities but they were looking for what would be a pretty hefty rise and to put them on a workable wage rather than dependant on tips. Now you see there is undercurrents to a lot of this because I think around that time what happened was that the, see people had moved onto the pay as you earn, onto PAYE so tax wise and that you see, what the PAYE people were coming along and the waiter was saying I earn £7.50, £8.00 a week, and of course the tax people were coming along and saying well you can't live on that so what they were doing was they were saying well you must have at least £20 a week so they were taxing £12 on the basis of £20.

300.**MM:** Of £12 tips yeah.

301.**FF:** And then of course the waiting people and that were kicking up against that and of course the old game was, well prove to us you are not earning that. Prove to us that your gratuities don't come to that. Of course they couldn't prove that so what they were seeking was a workable wage and theoretically it was to do away with tipping. And of course the employers wouldn't meet that, they wouldn't meet it all so then they came back with well status quo but a 10% service charge. And of course most of them, all of the employers, both the Federation, the Hotel Federation and the Federation, they were two, the Hotel Federation and the Federation of.....

302.**MM:** Was it the Restaurants Association of Ireland.

303.**FF:** Yeah, the Restaurant Associations. None of them would agree and it eventually came to a strike. Now as you say the like of the, there was a couple settled up even before it broke out, I think the day before. The Red Bank and a couple of other places like that, and a few others. It went for nine months and it became very bitter because as you can imagine like there was all elements involved. There was the waiting people and then of course there were those who were not waiting felt aggrieved that they were out on strike and at the end of it.....

304.**MM:** They weren't going to get anything extra out of it anyway.

305.**FF:** So it lead to a lot of bitterness like you know and it was over a bad period of the year too. It stretched right over the winter period. But eventually.....

306.**MM:** Which were the worse places for it? Which places were out for nine months or?

307.**FF:** Well I know the Central was out for nine months.

308.**MM:** Did that mean that the whole hotel would have been shut down?

309.**FF:** Oh, closed up. I know the..... I think the Wicklow was out for the period. However, it was a sorry event and when it was all over then, the end of the day was like that the 10% didn't go to the waiting people. It was like the employers you know kept that as a kind of 'tiddly fund' to kind of pay everybody you know and tips continued. It was, it was bad.

310.**MM:** Just on the animosity there between sort of the waiters and people who weren't going to get what was the environment or the atmosphere like between front of house and sort of the kitchen? Could that have been a part of bad blood or was there always a bit of us and them?

311.**FF:** Well there was always two sides to the hot cupboard. There was always the front of the hot cupboard and the other side like you know the kitchen was behind. There was always a certain imbalance there in attitudes to like you know but it wouldn't, it certainly wouldn't have been improved by the strike.

312.**MM:** What was behind that do you think or was it just a cultural thing?

313.**FF:** I think it was the union pressing there standard influence because they would have been kind of..... Michael Mullen wouldn't have been terribly long in his post at that time. I think it was a question of like.....His attitude when that dispute started some of the employers rang him to say Mr. Mullen we'll have to come up and we'll have to have a chat about this and his attitude was well my address is on the last letter, that's why I'm available. He held his ground until they went down to.....

314.**MM:** Liberty Hall?

315.**FF:** Well Liberty Hall wasn't there, it was 29 Eden Quay. It was a shambles of a place but he said my office is in 29 and if you want to discuss this that's where I'm available. It was taking them down a peg and there was a good deal of that behind it. It was establishing the union as a force within. Prior to that it had been completely ignored.

316.**MM:** You mentioned earlier on about Ms. Mullen who was working in the Gresham, this sort of dedication you know. You saw a lot of that dedication.

317.**FF:** Oh yes you did with individuals right down along the line, in all sections people, there was, there was a lot of dedication. You had to have a certain satisfaction in what you were doing to stick with it. So that's part of the dedication and it went right through all branches of the industry.

318.**MM:** And do you think it was quite unique to catering?

319.**FF:** Yeah, I think it was yes, I think it was. I think so. Now I don't know whether (laugh) it's possibly a certain kickback from the involvement of catering from back to the big house.

320.**MM:** The servility sort of thing or whatever yeah. That's how I would see it yeah, yeah.

321.**FF:** Catering come from the big houses. These were all employees who would be dedicated or have to be dedicated and there is a certain amount of..... Like I could like see myself like you know what I mean at lunch service or at a function service or something your normal time for break off you wouldn't think of going off. No there is probably a certain historical kind of background. The same thing in your own meals and that you know, you wouldn't think of sitting down and having a meal off the a la carte if you thought you were going to be busy and it might be required. You'd just go off and have something else you know. That type of attitude. A thing that struck me , would you be aware of the first self-service restaurant ever in Dublin?

322.**MM:** No.

323.**FF:** Well that was in Woolworths. They had one in Grafton Street and they had one in Henry Street. But the one in Grafton Street had no restaurant but the one in Henry Street was unique in its day because this would have even been pre-war in the 1930s. Now they had a self-service restaurant. I can't think of, I don't know any other establishment anywhere that had self-service.

324.**MM:** It's interesting the likes of the Metropole and these things, they all had grill rooms didn't they?

325.**FF:** The Savoy were big into afternoon teas. They used to run an afternoon tea and they'd have an orchestra playing right. A three piece orchestra. The Metropole did something similar. The Metropole were big into dances.

326.**MM:** Now the Metropole was on O'Connell Street where Penny's is now.

327.**FF:** That building yeah, that was the Metropole. So yeah and Clery's built a ballroom and were big into dinner dances but they didn't have a restaurant. They only did evening dinner dances. They had cafes down through the shop or whatever but they didn't have restaurants as such.

328.**MM:** But there's another thing about the dinner dances. The dinner dances actually, I believe were sort of a turning point where the average man and woman began actually to go out.

329.**FF:** Socialise on an upmarket level. Yes, that's so.

330.**MM:** And when would that have happened or when would that have started?

331.**FF:** That would have kind of come into being just immediately after the war. You could say 1950, or '49 or '50 it started and it gained its real height around the 1970s and then people not only began to move around but into the 1970s came the greater affluence and the greater mobility in frequenting these places on a daily basis. Drop into this bar and into that restaurant and into the other and have a bite of lunch and so forth, you know. It was in the 1970s the industry as such opened out.

332.**MM:** And who do you think were the big movers now? I believe the Russell was, like. Sorry when did Jammet's close?

333.**FF:** It was into the 1960s. They closed somewhere around the '65, or '66. They didn't survive into the '70s. (**note**. Jammet's closed in 1967)

Figs. FF.4 (a): Mansion House Model (b) Customs House Model (Frank Farren)

334.**MM:** And how about the Red Bank?

335.**FF:** The Red Bank went on into, they would have gone into the 1970s, fairly early 1970s and then did they were bought over and became a church and a community of American, some American, their over in Bachelors Walk now. Some American priest community.

336.**MM:** In the early '70s the Russell would have been in its peak. That would have been sort of one of the top places in Dublin wouldn't it have been?

337.**FF:** Oh yes. Around that time it would have been Shelbourne, Russell, Hibernian, Jammet's, Red Bank, they would be the top five and then for the run of the mill then you'd the Metropole, Clery's for dancing and that, Savoy. The Savoy ran reasonably good restaurants, like you know. And they of course had them in Dublin, Limerick, Waterford, Cork. They ran reasonably good restaurants but one of their biggest in Dublin at any rate, one of their biggest was the afternoon venture.

338.**MM:** Afternoon tea.

339.**FF:** Yes. People went in at 3 p.m. / 3.30 p.m. for afternoon tea, 5 p.m. and then into the cinema. But at that time there was only the one cinema, it wasn't broken up into.....

340.**MM:** Oh right, just one cinema.

341.**FF:** Cause then you had the Royal, the Royal. But then the Royal hadn't got restaurants but they had a huge theatre. That seated something like 4,000 odd people.

Discussion on how ugly the building that replaced the Theatre Royal in Hawkins Street is.

342.**MM:** Gender. You mentioned that there was a woman who was the first woman you knew of who was a *chef de cuisine* in the Central.

343.**FF:** That's the only one I ever knew. Oh gender played a very big part. Very, very few women worked in kitchens with the exception of in the pastry house or on breakfast. But in the kitchen as such there were no apprentices women. No one classified as doing an apprenticeship.

344.**MM:** When did that change?

345.**FF:** It changed with the colleges opening in the early 1970s.

346.**MM:** But say when you went around to Rockbrook or Maynooth was it all men?

347.**FF:** They were all men, all men, all male.

348.**MM:** So it was really when the actual regional colleges opened.

349.**FF:** When the regional colleges started but then for the first period in those, although the two courses, the girls and the boys were doing the same course, one was classified as the chef's course and the other was classified as cooks. They were doing exactly the same examination, they were doing exactly the same and yet they were dressed differently and they were, one was classified as a like an apprenticeship as such you know and the other was just a cook's course.

350.**MM:** And I take it they were paid differently.

351.**FF:** They were paid differently when they went into industry. But that broke down, that broke down fairly, into the 1970s. They broke down by the beginning of the 1980s. Well then you see CERT when they had taken on students at first they not only, this didn't happen in Dublin because all there students for Dublin came from Dublin but they used to provide accommodation. It was supervised accommodation and then after a little while it was supervised accommodation for the girls, the boys were dropped they could go where liked, you know. When their hat was on their house was thatched, so they were left fly and the girls were under supervised accommodation and then eventually that was dropped also and they were given an allowance for accommodation and then around about that stage also they were give the option of which uniform they'd use in class, and for about a year, maybe two years you had a sort of mixture and then of course fizzled off. And now of course when they go into the industry they claim exactly the same. But you see the gender thing comes from going back to what I was talking to you now about first about, the 1940s and the 1950s and before that. See the kitchen was very strenuous, not alone from the heat point of view but from the physical point of view. All the stockpots and everything had to lifted up onto the range and taken down. There was a physical aspect to it which wasn't suited to women. Consequently they were normally to be found in the pastry house where the strenuous work and the heating and so forth wouldn't be as great and on breakfast. Now in the bigger hotels, and that very often the breakfast wasn't done from the main kitchen anyway, it may be done from a breakfast kitchen or a function kitchen or something like, because breakfast running onto 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. would be interfering with the day coming on for functions. So breakfast maybe would be done somewhere else. So breakfast and pastry were the domain of the women and that's basically the history of it because work in the main kitchen was very strenuous. I mean you had literally thirty gallon stock pots. Now they had to lifted up onto the range and taken down, etc. and they were big coppers. Hefty work. Work was strenuous and it wasn't easy, it wasn't easy going at all.

352.**MM:** Who do you think were the main catalysts for change? Clearly there was a change in the '50s when equipment started to change. That was one sort of change.

353.**FF:** Yes. The nature of the business changed with the vast volume, with the type of equipment coming in that.....

354.**MM:** Tourism then started I suppose. I suppose *An Tóstal*, what was it 1958? and then *Bord Fáilte* starting and Aer Lingus and all of that would have made changes. What about PV Doyle?

355.**FF:** Yes, he was a revolutionary in the business but he was purely, I'd place him purely from the entrepreneurial side of things like seeing the industry as a profitable and building up a team to operate it you know.

356.**MM:** How about Micky Mullen. Would you reckon that he did an awful lot for?

357.**FF:** Well he certainly helped. But the unions today they're still not as influential as they might be or as they should be and you see you have now such a thing like being brought in by the EU and so forth that apprenticeship is really, not really recognised now as such. You do training courses, you do training periods but you're to be paid whatever level you're capable of. So if you start working in an establishment today and where there was normally say, lets say a five year

apprenticeship, I think the official last time a couple of years ago it was down to four official but if you after three years, two years could show that you were capable of a *chef de partie* you were to be offered the position and paid the level.

358.**MM:** How do you feel about that?

359.**FF:** I think its right. I know in my case to do.....

360.**MM:** It was a method of keeping you down for a number of years.

361.**FF:** Yes, to do your full apprenticeship was certainly in my case was holding me back. It was as I'd say, three years before I was finished I was literally doing the work.

362.**MM:** So the end of the apprenticeship is not necessary a bad thing on one side but there are certain bad elements of it.

363.**FF:** But also the business, the trade has changed so much now that length of apprenticeship is not required now because its moving more into the academic side of things into the value of foods, their nutrients, their contents, their capabilities and all so forth because there is quite a vast amount of produce now that you don't have to process. I mean most of your vegetables today you don't process. They come either frozen or pre-sliced or whatever. Like no one in there right mind today unless they have any personal reason for doing it would go into the making of puff pastry. Too much work involved, too long, and too tedious, you can buy an excellent product. There are desserts and sweets coming on the market that you won't equal and you can buy them ready to go. Now you can put your own imprint on them but you wouldn't consider the time and the cost. You see a big thing too is my early stages and right up to and well into my full-time in the physical industry as such, the big factor was the food cost. Food cost was higher than labour. So you processed. You bought your spinach in big bags and you spent your time stalking it. You bought your peas when they were available fresh and you wanted to put them on the menus as spring fresh peas and all. You bought them in pods and you shelled them because produce was costing more than the labour. Now that's reversed. The labour is costing more than the product now. So you can buy the product now cheaper than you can produce it. So that's a big influence, a huge influence. So with the result now that literally you could run a restaurant today in a dispense kitchen if you so wished. You can buy in your fillets, striploins, Portorhouse, you name it, your cutlets, you can buy them in chined, ready to put the fruit on.

364.**MM:** Silver service when did it come to an end?

365.**FF:** Well silver service, at around about the time of the closure of Red Bank and Jammet's.

366.**MM:** Late '60s, early '70s.

367.**FF:** Yes and the big problem in catering in the industry today is service.

368.**MM:** Once the silver service stopped that was nearly the end of the apprenticeship from a waiter's point of view and.....

369.**FF:** But even the amount of waiting that has to be done today there is no finesse whatever in it, absolutely none. You go to a function today. I was at one fairly recently, a luncheon, a table of nineteen. It was pre-booked so it wasn't that they were..... There was one waiting staff designated to the group. Now you can imagine going around taking the order for the first course, the first starter and the thing. It took eternity, so they got lost and so they get a help then when the first course is ready someone else appears with half of them. This person coming in hasn't a bulls clue what goes where. You have this diabolical approach. 'Who's for smoked salmon? who ordered...?', you know what I mean. Now I was contemplating being involved in running that particular function but as it so happened it went out of my hands altogether so I had basically

nothing to do with it. But if I were booking that I'd have gone to the management and said right, well we're going to be nineteen, maybe twenty. What waiting staff are you assigning to that function? I'd make the waiting part of the menu and if he said well one well I'd say okay I'm not disputing but I just want to know, your assigning one and I'll tell you what I want you to do I want you to employ another person to attend that function and that function only. Now I'll pay you for four or five hours or whatever it is at the rate. What rate are you paying? Okay, you're paying them €10 a hour. I'll pay the €50. Put €50 on the bill but I want two persons on that one because it got to the stage that it's irritating, absolutely irritating to sit at that table and to be approached over your shoulder. No essence of, they haven't even the knowledge or the ability to put the plated down in front of your wife before they put it down in front of you. It just happens to be which one they want to get out of their hand first. It's gone to that level.

370.**MM:** The Hibernian, you worked in it briefly. You didn't like it. It was rougher like.....

371.**FF:** No, I was fairly early on at that time and you would not be allowed touch near this or go near that or you spent your time stoking the fires or shining the rail around.

372.**MM:** Right okay, yeah and you'd come from being hands on up in.....

373.**FF:** And the attitude of this man coming down, 'oh boy', you know. It wasn't my scene. Oh the standard wise it was good but if you could get at it. But you weren't allowed near it. You weren't allowed near it.

374.**MM:** But was there much of that, that a lot of people, instead of sharing information or sharing work they held onto it.

375.**FF:** Oh yes. You see you had to get the confidence of your *chef de partie* or your, you had to get to the stage that they had to rely on you before they'd impart to you and you see that is why so many people and it was common in the industry at the time to move on. You never served your five or six years in the one house. No house ever taught you any further than they catered themselves. There was no one ever brought you aside here's something that's like 'here something, just a simple thing like a thickening a sauce with a butter or something like that'. Now unless that's done in that establishment no one would ever come to you and say by the way we don't ever do this but if you want to improve that now here's what you do. Now keep it moving and drop..... They knew that but they wouldn't tell you because you see they depended upon whatever information they had for their survival.

376.**MM:** So by keeping you down it kept them up.

377.**FF:** So you never and I used to say that when I was out in the Malahide because we did a good trade and we did reasonably but I always said to lads that I took on at a certain stage I said look cause I organised our brigade into the union, it wasn't the best thing but it was the only thing there was. I used to say to them time you moved on. Go look for something because you've advanced here.....As far as you will here. You can stay as long as you like but you're only going to be doing the same thing and you've learned whatever has been done here. Now I could if I could take you as an individual bring you forward but I can't, I'm too busy, I've a kitchen run. I've a brigade to organise, three/four weddings tomorrow morning, a dinner dance tonight, I can't. So I used to push them and in fact when I'd be in the union I'd talk to some of the chefs, I wouldn't look for the thing on the wall but I'd talk around to some of them and are you looking for a chef? I'll tell you I have a lad out here now, he's quite good now. He's about fourth year, if you happen to be looking for someone. Now they'd maybe come back, it might be sometime you'd lift the phone. You were talking about so and so, send them into me because it's only fair to them because they'll advance no further than that particular establishment caterers and that's it.

378.**MM:** Why do you think so many people have left the industry?

379.**FF:** Too hard, unsocial, you're busy when other people are free. You're busiest are at Christmas, bank holidays, big football matches, rugby, you name it, all summer. I know the time in my earliest stages you dare not even think of a week or a fortnight's holiday between May and the end of September. Even if business turned out not to be as great in advance they just wouldn't say to you, you can have your holidays. Holidays would start in October. Now my earliest days it was a five-and-a-half day week, with one Sunday in four. You were free one Sunday in four and it was a five-and-a-half day week. It was a fifty-four week and that was if you were in a regulated hotel. On season you worked seven days but you didn't mind that because you had no where else to go. But the working week was fifty-four hours, five-and-a-half days and the norm was in the hotel was one Sunday in the month. So you worked three and one free and you had split hours. You go in for 9 a.m., you were out at 3 p.m., you were back at 6 p.m. until 10 p.m., late function you were on till 1 a.m., still back in at 9 a.m. As I say holiday periods out, Christmas out.

Discussions on Hitler's Brother as a waiter in the Shelbourne

380.**MM:** Have you anything else that you think is important.

381.**FF:** No, not really. One thing I can say that, I have covered parts that were tough. I can honestly say I never didn't like going into work. I've always, whatever it was or at whatever stage, whatever it was I was sufficiently interested in it to get self-satisfaction and that's a big thing.

382.**MM:** Yeah, absolutely, yeah.

383.**FF:** It's a big thing because that is one of the big reasons that so many go to the pubs and go to the you know because they're cheesed off, they're browned off, they can't face this any longer.

384.**MM:** Why do you think so many took to the drink?

385.**FF:** Well the conditions. First and foremost they were working in an environment where drink was available. In Jammet's for example you had a, the kitchen staff brigade had a ration of two pints a day. One in the morning time, and one in the evening. That was French restaurant style. So if you were young enough and you took to beer and that and fancied beers at all you were introduced to it to start. The whole environment, you were always in the environment where drink is available, you know, you didn't have to cough up in a sense, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. Your lunch would be better than the staff lunch. So you were in that environment, that's one. Second, is the unsocial aspects of it. Hanging around two/three hours in the afternoons, wet afternoon working in the Gresham, Hibernian wherever it was, living out in the backside of Walkinstown or you know. Even if you hop on a bus and get out there, it's 4 p.m. before your out and 5 p.m. your coming back you know. That type of thing. So it was go and have a few drinks, or down to a snooker hall or somewhere. A big factor on the dining room, on the waiting side is the irregular pay. At least on the kitchen side you got your money each week. And you kind of budgeted for the week. The waiter never did that. He only budgeted to his next meal.

386.**MM:** (Laugh). Because there would always be tips or something.

387.**FF:** Always like the Mr. McCall or something is going to turn up. I'll get a big one tonight. That will pay the bill so I can have another couple. These are the aspects. All these things mixed up. And I can see it on the dining side also, people just a couple, a bottle of wine and they go off and there's another glass, a glass, there's what five glasses to a bottle or so. They have two each and the waiter isn't going to throw that out. I'll give you a good one…In the Central at Christmas there was this old resident, she was resident in the Central, obviously a person who had money but only at Christmas would she buy a little bottle, a little stout bottle, I forget the name of it. It was a bottle of wine. It was one of these small ones, but always on Christmas day. The only time on Christmas day at her lunch had she one of these bottles and she'd have a glass of it and then she'd

leave it on the table and that was for her dinner. So this casual was in over the Christmas, do you see, and being the casual he didn't know the scene and of course he went off and finished half the bottle. He was back on for dinner and of course 'I'll have my bottle of wine', so he dashed to the bar, got a bottle, opened it, empty half and bring half bottle down and put it on the table (laugh). He cursed like hell (laugh)

388.**MM:** (Laugh). And that had to come out of his own pocket.

389.**FF:** Of course (laugh).

390.**MM:** What about violence in the kitchen?

391.**FF:** The only time I experienced what you might term as violence was I did about a fortnight in the Gresham, I never counted it as experience. It was when I came back from the Isle of Man, It was before I went into the Red Bank and I was in the union and it was on the thing they were only looking for someone for sick or holiday relief or someone was out side or someone was on holidays or that. The only time I experienced what you would call violence. It wasn't violence. Well it could have been violence, like Macker, the famous Macker. He was a devil for causing a *shamozzle* but however there was a glass case down at the end and they used to put up like duty rosters and that and I went down and I was looking at that you see and I could in the reflection, I could see him it was like a raw potato, mashed potato, potato anyhow. He was a devil for firing at people and he just missed and he hit the corner. He could have broken the glass but it didn't. That could have been violence you see. It was the only time I ever had anything pitched at me so I just turned around so he was right busy off doing something. He went into the larder, so I just went in after him. He was about that height. So I said 'come here you'. 'You do that again and I'll kick your teeth in.' (Laugh).

392.**MM:** (Laugh).

393.**FF:** 'Oh sorry, I didn't.' Don't make it worse by denying it I said but I said you do that again and I'll kick your teeth in. It never happened again. No. I can't say.

End of Tape Two and end of Interview